

A Front Row Seat

1 Chronicles 4:9-10



[Harry Peasley](#)

CPC 11/11/01

[BACK TO MAIN SERMON PAGE](#)

Friday morning at 11:30, the phone rings - brrrrrrring! I said, "hello, this is Harry." Pastor Tom's on the other end and he asks, "Harry, are you coming to church this Sunday?" Quickly I respond, "yes." Pastor Tom then asks, "are you coming for both services?" Now thinking I must have said something to him previously as I do sing in the choir and normally would attend both services, I look at my calendar and think for a second about his question and respond, "yes Tom, I'm planning on being there for both services." Pastor Tom then asks a third question, "would you mind preaching?" Now there's an awkward pause as I'm waiting for laughter on his end to let me know he's joking but it never comes and I answer, "I suppose so." Tom then tells me about the clot that's developed in his leg and his doctor said he must not be on his feet for a while. I then asked him if he had anything in mind for the sermon. His response was to do something motivational or inspirational. Having come off a business trip the day before I wasn't feeling too motivated or inspired so I asked if he had anything else in mind. He said it would be nice if it was Biblical (long pause). "OK - how about what you were planning to do. I can work off your notes and that would probably be better for me as my creativity is a little low right now." So what I'm going to be preaching today is Pastor Tom's sermon adjusted to my style of delivery. Today's sermon is about The Prayer of Jabez.

*Oh that you would bless me indeed,
and enlarge my territory,
that Your hand would be with me,
and that You would keep me from evil.*

A few weeks ago, Tom in his first sermon of this series, talked about asking God "big time." He uses the words "big time" - he likes that phrase. God wants to partner with you and work through you. Tom uses the words "big time" because he believes God should be there for His supernatural powers to give you His blessings. A blessing is something that is big, that only God can give you. Last week Tom talked about enlarging your territory. I thought he did a fabulous job of relating our territory to job titles. He said that we should be enlarging our territory to do God's work. I too am going to talk about enlarging our territory.

We tend not to want to enlarge our territory and I can understand why. When we want to enlarge our territory or we think about enlarging our territory, we have fears within us. I believe this is something we learn over time not to do. From the early age of two we are learning to expand our personal territory as we trek into the world. At each and every move, we hear the word. We know the word all too well. It's that two letter word that each and every one of us has heard a million times - NO. I think, over time, we get a dose of stinking thinking. I really do. We plant negativity into our minds and we tend to think we can't enlarge our territory for God.

Has anybody here ever trained fleas? Fleas are interesting creatures. They can jump hundreds of times their own body height. Fleas naturally jump 2, 3, 4 feet in the air. That's how they jump from dog to dog. If you take a flea and put it in a jar, screw the lid on (put a few holes in for air of course) you will see the flea doing what it naturally does - jump. After a while the flea gets tired of hitting it's little head on the lid and quits jumping so high. What's the flea learning? It's territory. In time, the flea will only jump as high as the lid so as to not hit its head anymore. At that point, you can open the lid of the jar and the flea will never jump out. You've just trained a flea. People aren't too much different than that. We don't open ourselves up when we can or when the opportunity is there. Many times the opportunity is staring us in the face and we ignore it. I believe God brings us together and it's up to us to do His work.

In your bulletin there is an explanation of why we don't jump out of the jar for ourselves.

Our Math

My abilities + experiences + training + my personality and appearance + my past + the expectations of others = my assigned territory.

When we talk about God's power working through us, what we usually mean is "by us" or "in association with us." God in his ultimate wisdom gave us the free will to choose. He knows that only true love comes through free will and not by force. If God forced us to love Him, which He could do, He knows it would be short-lived.

God's Math

My willingness and weakness + God's will and supernatural power = my expanding territory.

Does God know we're willing? Does God know we have weaknesses? Does God want to partner through us? Does God love us?

Last year, the company I was working with folded. 2300 people were out of a job and I knew many of them. A person I did some work with by the name of Jeff was part of the 2300 and looking for work. As a web designer I knew he wouldn't be looking long. Jeff has a growing family, the third to be born any day now. Jeff is a big Oakland A's fan and we talked a while ago about going to a game together. In February of this year, I gave Jeff a call. I hadn't talked with him in a long while and as we were catching up I asked him if he was interested in going to a game this summer. He said yes. We hadn't talked in the next couple of months, but next time I did call he told me he probably couldn't go. About a month ago, he was driving in his car and started to feel funny. He was driving with his 3-year-old girl in the back seat and had the presence of mind to pull off the side of the road. Jeff blacked out for a period of time, which he didn't know. When he came to, he called his wife from his cell phone to come get him because he was scared. As it turned out, he had a seizure and was diagnosed with a golf ball sized tumor in his brain. During the next few months, he had the tumor removed and was recovering very well. I called him on a weekly basis just to talk. During one of our conversations I told him about a passage in a Bible study I'm currently doing with Pastor Tom on the Gospel of John. We had about an hour-long discussion and a few more after that. In another phone conversation, Jeff thanked me for all the discussions and for not talking about the illness. Most people only talked with him about his tumor, I gave him a distraction and good healthy conversation. By the way, we did go to a game this summer.

Friday at 11:30, I get a call from Pastor Tom. I'm not sure if he's enlarging his territory or I'm enlarging mine. I'm not sure if it even matters. But I'll trust in it, because I know in the long run there will be some good that will come out of this opportunity. You see - I believe the world constantly tells us NO, we tell ourselves NO, but God tells us YES. Amen.

Due to an unexpected illness, Pastor Tom was unable to present this sermon, but provided it to CPC member Harry Peasley, who graciously merged it with his own experiences to become this document. To God be the glory!

[BACK TO MAIN SERMON PAGE](#)

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